The Test and Trial

at

MINNEAPOLIS

by

ELLEN G. WHITE

North Fitzroy, September 1, 1892

Elder O. A. Olsen,
Battle Creek, Michigan.

Dear Brother:

We are certainly living amid the perils of the last days, and while we may intellectually accept the theory of the truth, it will be of no saving value to us unless the prayer of Christ avails in our behalf. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." The meaning of that prayer is, make them holy through the knowledge of the word. "The light (Christ) shineth in darkness (the world), and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Instead of welcoming that which scatters the darkness, many comprehended it not, and received it not. Ministers are sent, as was John, to bear witness of that light. The office of the messenger sent of God is not to draw the sympathies of the people to himself, but to centre them upon Christ. The burden of his message should be, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Christ was "in the world, and the world was made by Him"; but the world has sunk to such terrible depths of unbelief that when its own Creator came to it, it knew Him not. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This grace is not inherited. **I wish that all would see that the very same spirit which refused to accept Christ, the light that would dispel the moral darkness, is far from being extinct in this age of the world.** There are those in our day who are no more ready to recognize and acknowledge light than were the people when the prophets and the apostles came with the messages from God, **and many rejected the message and despised the messenger.** Let us beware that this spirit is not entertained by any of us.

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember then from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will

come to thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." **He who was seen by John in the vision, in the midst of the golden candlesticks, represents himself as walking among them, going from church to church, from congregation to congregation and from soul to soul.** Here is unwearied vigilance. While the undershepherds may be asleep, or engrossed with matters of small importance, he that keepeth Israel doth not slumber nor sleep. **He is the true Watchman.** The presence and the sustaining grace of Christ are the secret of all light and life. We are kept by the power of God, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave the message to John to be written, to come down the ages to the end of the world. Words of commendation are spoken to the church of Ephesus; the well done is pronounced on the good and faithful servant, but the message does not close here. **The Saviour says, "nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This has been brought before me in clear lines again and again, and I have presented it to the people by pen and voice.** Does this striking message mean nothing to us? Is it in no sense applicable? Why are not such solemn warnings contemplated? Why do not all, with watchfulness and humility and confession manifest that repentance that needeth not to be repented of. Why do so many pass on without taking heed? Is love abiding in the church? Is it not almost extinct? With many their first love has cooled. Brethren do not love brethren. The love of many has waxed cold. The True Witness represents all who have left their first love as fallen. Did he not know their peril? "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Shall these heart searching truths continue to be passed by with indifference by the churches? The loss of the first love has opened the door to a great amount of selfishness, evil surmising, evil speaking, envy, jealousy, hard-heartedness. This is the first borne when the fervor of the first love has grown cold. There has been but little restraint upon the tongue, for prayer has been neglected. **A Pharisaical righteousness has been cherished; there is a deadness of spirituality; and a lack of spiritual eyesight is the result.**

The only hope for our churches today is to repent and do their first works. The name of Jesus does not

kindle the heart with love. A mechanical, formel orthodoxy has taken the place of deep, fervent charity, and tenderness to one another. Will any give heed to the solemn admonition, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die." Fall upon the rock, and be broken; then let the Lord Jesus prepare you, to mould and fashion you, as a vessel unto honor. **Well may the people fear and tremble under these words; "Except thou repent, I will come unto thee, quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." What then? "If the light that is in thee become darkness, how great is that darkness."** The Spirit will not always strive with the heart that is filled with perversity. The infinite, forebearing One who paid the price of His own blood to save His people, is addressing them. Who will hearken to His warning? Have the churches that claim to believe the truth for these last days been fruit bearing trees of righteousness? Why are they not bearing much fruit to the glory of God? Why are they not abiding in Christ, and going on from strength to strength, from character to character? The word of the Lord to His people is, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand against the wiles of the Devil." Why are the people thus addressed degenerating into weakness and inefficiency, not having the love of Christ burning upon the altar of their hearts, and therefore unable to kindle love in the hearts of others. God's people have evidence piled upon evidence; they have truth powerful and convincing; shall it be kept in the outer court so that it does not sanctify the soul? Shall the candle that once burned brightly, sending its light amid the moral darkness of error, gradually go out, until it is quenched in the darkness? How was it with Ephesus? She knew not the time of her visitation. She did not heed the solemn admonition of God. She did not maintain a vital connection with Christ, and grievous wolves entered in, and spared not the flock. That church, one beloved of God, that might have sent her bright rays amid the moral darkness to enlighten many souls, permitted her light to go out.

One of the greatest sins that is now extinguishing spiritual light is want of Love for Jesus and for one another. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." See the longing, yearning love of Jesus who presents to His people the attractions of eternal life, that they may catch the glory of the future world and regain their first love. It is not the fashion now to re-

pent; it is regarded by some as altogether too humiliating a work, altogether too old fashioned.

This then is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth for the darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Could any deception be more sharp and clear than John has given us? **These things are written for us; they are applicable to the churches of Seventh Day Adventists.** Some may say, "I do not hate my brother; I am not so bad as that." But how little they understand their own hearts. They may think they have a zeal for God in their feelings against their brother if his ideas seem in any way to conflict with theirs; feelings are brought to the surface that have no kinship with love. **They show no disposition to harmonize with him; they would as leave be at swords point with their brother as not, and yet he may be bearing a message from God to the people, just the light we need for this time.**

Why do not brethren of like precious faith consider that in every age, when the Lord has sent a special message to His people, all the powers of the confederacy of evil are set at work to prevent the word of truth from coming to those who should receive it. If Satan can impress the mind and stir up the passions of those who claim to believe the truth, and thus lead them to unite with the forces of evil, he is well pleased. **If once he can get them to commit themselves on the wrong side, he has laid his plans to lead them on a long journey;** through his deceptive wiles he will cause them to act upon the same principle he adopted in his disaffection in heaven. They take step after step in the false way, until there seems to be no other course than for them to go on, believing they are right in their bitterness of feeling against their brethren. Will the Lord's

messenger bear the pressure brought against him? If so, it is because God bids him stand in His strength, and vindicate the truth that he is sent of God.

When men listen to the Lord's message, but through temptation allow prejudice to bar the mind and heart against the reception of truth, the enemy has the power to present the most precious things in a distorted light. **Looking through the medium of prejudice and passion, they feel too indignant to search the Scriptures in a Christlike spirit, but repudiate the whole matter because points are presented that are not in accordance** with their own ideas. When a new view is presented, the question is often asked, **"Who are its advocates?" What is the position or influence of the one who would teach us, who have been students of the Bible for many years?** God will send His words of warning by whom He will send. And the question to be settled is not what person is it who brings the message, this does not in any way affect the word spoken. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Truth is often preached by one who has not experienced its power; but it is truth nevertheless, and is blessed to those who, drawn by the Spirit of God accept it. **But when the truth is presented by one who is himself sanctified by it, it has a freshness, a force, that gives it a convincing power to the hearer.** The truth in its power upon the heart is precious, and the truth addressed to the understanding is clear. Both are needful, the work, and the inward testimony of the Spirit. In regard to the testimony that has come to us through the Lord's messengers we can say, "We know in whom we have believed; we know that Christ is our righteousness, not alone because He is so described in the Bible, but because we have felt His transforming power in our own hearts.

Now although there has been a determined effort to make of no effect the message of God has sent, its fruits have been proving that it was from the source of light and truth.

Those who have cherished unbelief and prejudice, who in place of helping to do the work the Lord would have them do, have stood to bar the way against all evidence, cannot be supposed to have clearer spiritual eyesight for having so long closed their eyes to the light God sent to the people. **If we are to bear a part in this work to its close, we must recognize the fact that there are good things to come to the people of God in a way that we have not discerned; and that there will be resistance from the very ones we expected to**

engage in such a work. A man that is sincere in the wrong is not justified in the wrong, because he has opened his heart to a class of evidence leading him to condemn the right, and has closed his heart to a class of evidence, which, if he would not cherish prejudice, would help him to see and acknowledge what is true.

How long will the Lord have patience with men in their blindness, how long will He wait before leaving them to grope their way to final darkness, we cannot determine.

Should the Lord's messengers, after standing manfully for the truth for a time, fall under temptation, and dishonor Him who has given them their work, will that be proof that the message is not true? No; because the Bible is true. "To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Sin on the part of the messenger of God would cause Satan to rejoice, and those who have rejected the message and the messenger would triumph; but it would not at all clear the men who are guilty of rejecting the message of truth sent of God.

One matter burdens my soul: the great lack of the love of God, which has been lost through **continued resistance of light and truth,** and the influence of those who have been engaged in active labor, who in the face of evidence piled upon evidence, have exerted an influence to counteract the work of the message God sent. I point them to the Jewish nation, and ask, must we leave our brethren to pass over the same path of blind resistance till the very end of probation? **If ever a people needed true and faithful watchmen, who will not hold their peace, who will cry day and night, sounding the warnings God has given, it is Seventh Day Adventists.** Those who have had great light, blessed opportunities, who, **like Capernaum have been exalted to heaven in point of privilege,** shall they by non-improvement be left to darkness corresponding to the light given?

I wish to plead with our brethren who shall assemble at the General Conference to heed the message given to the Laodiceans. What a condition of blindness is theirs; this subject has been brought to your notice again and again; but your dissatisfaction with your spiritual condition has not been deep and painful enough to work a reform. "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods; and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind and naked." **The guilt of self-deception is upon our churches, the religious life of many is a lie.**

Jesus has presented to them the precious jewels of truth, the riches of His grace and salvation, the glistening white vesture of His own righteousness, woven in heaven's loom and containing not one thread of human invention. Jesus is knocking; open the door of the heart and buy of Him the precious heavenly treasure. Shall His pleadings fall upon ears that are dull of hearing if not entirely closed. Shall Jesus knock in vain? "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." If you will hearken, and open the door, he will come in and sup with you, and you may sup with Him. Will you respond? "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

I ask, what means the contention and strife among us? What means this hard, iron spirit, which is seen in our churches, in our institutions, and which is so utterly unchristlike. **I have deep sorrow of heart because I have seen how readily a word or action of Elder Jones or Elder Waggoner is criticized. How readily many minds overlook all the good that has been done by them in the few years past, and see no evidence that God is working through these instrumentalities. They hunt for something to condemn, and their attitude toward these brethren who are zealously engaged in doing a good work, shows that feelings of enmity and bitterness are in the heart. What is needed is the converting power of God upon hearts and minds. Cease watching your brethren with suspicion.**

As Christ was about to leave his disciples he said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. This is the measure with which you are to love one another,—As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." Again He said, "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I also loved you; continue ye in my love." Mark the words of Christ, and bear them in mind "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one." How full and perfect is this union to be? "As thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, and that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;

and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

What large possibilities are presented before us in the words spoken by Jesus! He says, "**I have declared unto them by name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.**" **These words from the prayer of Christ are worthy of being written in letters of gold. They should be dwelt upon, and presented to the world by pen and voice. But why is it that those who claim to believe the truth are not doers of the word. Why is so little said upon these subjects which mean so much to every church and to every individual member.** Think you that heaven does not look with amazement upon those who profess to be children of God, yet who pass on inattentive, careless, disregarding the plainest words of truth enjoined upon them. Is it not time for us to consider that we must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?

There are many in the ministry who have no love for God or for their fellowmen. They are asleep, and while they sleep, Satan is sowing His tares. The flock of God is in need of help from heaven, and the sheep and lambs are perishing for food. **But let those who would have a deep and living experience in the things of God cease to depend upon men, even upon their own pastors and teachers, and put their trust wholly in God, using their God-given ability to His glory. Christ needs to be lifted up before the people; for by beholding Him we are to become changed into His image.** Jesus says, "Without me ye can do nothing." He has made ample atonement, and he who lays hold upon Christ by faith has peace with God. The Holy Spirit purifies the heart; presenting God in new and enduring (endearing) views as our Heavenly Father.

Oh that evil may be turned out of our hearts. Oh that the soul may be thoroughly cleansed! Oh that the Word of God may abide in the soul as a living principle! Cultivate love for Jesus, love for those who believe in Him, and love for the wandering and perishing. **We must have the love which is of heavenly birth, and nourish it as a heavenly plant.** Stubbornness which prevails to a fearful extent must be broken up. The professed followers of Christ should no longer catch up little points of difference, meditating upon them, and talking about them, and magnifying them until love is gone from the soul, as water from a leaky vessel. **We must have a sanctifying influence of the grace**

of Christ in our hearts, else all our deeds will be as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal.

Will the people of God heed the voice of warning, and cultivate love? Will they lay aside their suspicion and jealousy? They cannot do this unless they fall all broken before God. Many have made and are still making great blunders. They love their own way so well that they will not surrender to God's way. Many have been convinced that they have grieved the Spirit of God by their resistance of light, but they hated to die to self, and deferred to do the work of humbling their hearts and confessing their sins. They would not acknowledge that the reproof was sent of God, or the instructions were from heaven until every shadow of uncertainty was removed. They did not walk out in the light. They hoped to get out of difficulty in some easier way than by confession of sin, and Satan has kept hold of them and tempted them, and they have had but feeble strength to resist him. Evidence has been piled upon evidence, but they have not been willing to acknowledge it. By their stubborn attitude they have revealed the soul malady that was upon them; for no evidence could satisfy them. Doubt, unbelief, prejudice, and stubbornness killed all love from their souls. They demanded perfect assurance, but this was not compatible with faith. Faith rests not on uncertainty, but upon evidence. Demonstration is not faith. **If the rays of light which shone at Minneapolis were permitted to exert their convincing power upon those who took their stand against light, if all had yielded their ways, and submitted their wills to the Spirit of God at that time, they would have received the richest blessing, disappointed the enemy, and stood as faithful men, true to their convictions. They would have had a rich experience; but self said, No. Self was not willing to be bruised; self struggled for the mastery. And every one of these souls will be tested again on the points where they failed then. They will have less clearness of judgment, less submission, less genuine love for God or their brethren now than before the test and trial at Minneapolis. In the books of heaven they are registered as Wanting. Self and passion developed hateful characteristics. Since that time, the Lord has given abundance of evidence in messages of light and salvation. No more tender calls, no better opportunities could be given them in order that they might do that which they ought to have done at Minneapolis.** The light has been withdrawing from some, and ever since they have been walking in the sparks of their own kindling. No

one can tell how much may be at stake when neglecting to comply with the call of the Spirit of God. **The time will come when they will be willing to do anything and everything possible in order to have a chance of hearing the call which they rejected at Minneapolis.** God moved upon hearts, but many yielded to another spirit which was moving upon their passions from beneath. Oh that their poor souls would make thorough work before it is everlastingly too late. Better opportunities will never come, deeper feelings they will not have. In order to have better opportunities in the future, they must improve the opportunities they already have, yield to the Spirit of God, and heed the voice from heaven, giving prompt obedience from willing hearts. God will not be trifled with. **The sin committed in what took place at Minneapolis remains on the record books of heaven, registered against the names of those who resisted light, and it will remain upon the record until full confession is made, and the transgressors stand in full humility before God.** The levity of some, the free speeches of others, the manner of treating the messenger and the message when in their private stopping places, the spirit that stirred to action from beneath, all stand registered in the books of heaven. And when these persons are tried, and brought over the ground again, the same spirit will be revealed. When the Lord has sufficiently tried them, if they do not yield to them, He will withdraw His Holy Spirit. May the Lord grant that those who are deceived may make thorough work before probation closes.

God speaks to whom he will to carry His message. They must declare the message He gives, without reservation. Jonah was commanded to proclaim the destruction of Nineveh; for a time he refused to speak the words given him of God. Fainting with fear, wild with the awful message committed to him, he hurried away from the place where he was sent. He was a disobedient prophet; he fled from duty; but when God speaks to men, commanding them to bear His message to the people, it means something. Those who are commanded to bear a message must move out although obstacles of a forbidding character are in the way. Those who claim to know the truth, and yet lay every obstacle in the way, so that light shall not come to the

people, will have an account to settle with God that tehy will not be pleased to meet. **God manages His own work, and woe to the man who puts his hand to the ark of God.**

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